



Department of Commerce Safety Report

June 2002

Safety Report

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Introduction

This report provides an update to Department of Commerce (DOC) managers and employees on the progress of Departmental safety initiatives and information regarding important Department-wide safety issues for June 2002. The report also contains the latest available accident data for the Department. Section One of the report, Program Initiatives, provides updates on the safety initiatives outlined in the Safety Program Plan available at <http://ohrm.doc.gov/safetyprogram/safety.htm>. Section Two, Significant Safety Issues, outlines safety issues and concerns which arose in June 2002. Section Three, Injury Statistics, provides statistics regarding Department injuries, as reported to the Office of Workers' Compensation for May 2002, an analysis of the data to assist bureaus in focusing their safety efforts, and follow-up reports on several of the injuries reported. Section Four, Survey Results, provides the June results from the on-line survey available through the intranet Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Program Web Site.

Section One: Program Initiatives

Summer Safety: The OSH Program held a Summer Safety Brown Bag for employees in the Herbert C. Hoover Building. The event was organized to provide employees with safety information and tips to prevent common summer injuries and illnesses. The event included presentations by the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Park Police, D.C. Department of Recreation, and the OSH Program. Topics included boating safety, prevention of tick-borne diseases, motorcycle and bicycle safety, and pool safety. We hope to provide similar sessions seasonally to address common safety problems.

Safety Council: The Safety Council held its monthly meeting on June 6, 2002. Tony Pierpoint, the new DOC Safety Manager, was introduced and a number of safety issues and activities were discussed. Information on safety leadership training was provided to the Council. A training workshop, planned for August or September, is being coordinated for Safety Council members to provide guidance on aligning a safety vision, promoting safety awareness, and energizing commitment and involvement. The Council also received updates by the various safety teams and information was provided on recent guidance from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health on protecting building environments from airborne chemical, biological, and radiological attack. The meeting also included an excellent presentation by Mr. Gerald Lucas, Economic Development Administration (EDA), concerning many of the safety issues, initiatives and activities at EDA.

Safety Program Action Plan: We continue to make progress on the Safety Program Action Plan approved by the Deputy Secretary in February. The plan is posted on the new OSH Program Web Site. The four workgroups, which were established to address key components of the

proposed Action Plan, continue to work aggressively to identify and implement key initiatives. The goals and activities of each workgroup are listed below. Each group reported its progress at the June Safety Council meeting.

Inspections and Self-Assessment Workgroup - This workgroup is developing a Department-wide methodology for supervisors to conduct safety self-assessments and safety professionals to complete annual workplace inspections. Draft versions of Supervisor and Safety Manager Inspection Checklists are being developed. Checklists from the Bureau of Census and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration are being used as guides. The proposed checklists will be provided at the next Safety Council meeting.

Communications and Training Policy Workgroup - This workgroup is developing safety awareness and training tools for employees and supervisors. The workgroup is currently developing a safety poster titled, "Safety Is Priority One." The poster includes a statement from the Secretary that expresses the importance and value placed on the safety and well-being of DOC employees. The statement, which has been approved by the Secretary's office, says the following:

"At Commerce, the safety and well-being of our employees is paramount. Deputy Secretary Samuel Bodman and I are personally committed to ensuring that each employee is provided with a safe and healthy working environment. We are working to expand and enhance the Commerce Safety Program to better serve you and keep you informed on safety issues throughout the Department. Every employee must make safety their first priority. We encourage you to take an active part in workplace safety. To learn more about the safety program, and how you can make your workplace safer, please visit our Web Site at <http://ohrm.doc.gov/safetyprogram/safety.htm>."

The poster will be printed and widely distributed to the bureaus. In addition, the workgroup is developing an insert, which also includes the Secretary's message, for pay statements. Other workgroup activities include development of web-based training programs and videos.

Reporting Workgroup - This workgroup is addressing the challenging task of developing a web-based system to report accidents which will be more comprehensive than the Workers' Compensation system. The workgroup is evaluating a number of commercial systems. In addition, the Department of Labor (DOL) has developed their own electronic claims submission and tracking system. The workgroup requested that DOL provide a copy of the software. However, due to legislative inquiry, DOL is currently unable to provide a copy.

The Workgroup has established interim measures to provide injury information to bureaus. The OSH Program Office will provide biweekly summary reports and copies of Workers' Compensation forms to respective Safety Managers. The information is intended to ensure that Safety Managers are aware of the safety issues in their bureaus.

Health Units Workgroup - This workgroup is assessing the effectiveness of Department Health Units and developing Departmental policy regarding on-site health and occupational safety services. A formal list of recommendations and guidance is being developed, and should be completed in September.

Section Three: Injury Statistics and Analysis

In previous Safety Reports, we provided information on the total number of Departmental injuries for the past five years, and analyzed the types of injuries across the Department to determine the prevalence of such injuries.

The information below is updated using May 2002 statistics. Due to late submissions, processing limitations, and to ensure the accuracy of the information, this section will continue to include information up to the previous month. The data presented in the charts and tables are based upon Departmental Workers' Compensation Program records. At the present time, Workers' Compensation Program records continue to afford the most comprehensive evidence regarding workplace safety.

Total Recordable Cases Incidence Rate: To enable comparison with private industry, we are now using the OSHA "Total Recordable Cases Incidence Rate (TRCIR)" formula as our measure of injuries rather than determining the injury rate per 100 employees. The TRCIR formula divides the number of accidents by the actual hours worked in the organization and multiplies that figure by 200,000, an approximation of potential hours worked for 100 employees. In determining the total hours worked for an organization, we multiplied the number of employees by 1800 hours. A full-time employee can technically work 2087 hours per year if he or she takes no leave. However, given that the average age of our workforce is 46.9 years and the average years of service is 12.8, we imputed the average annual leave accrual rate as seven hours¹. Based on a seven hour annual leave accrual rate, we then estimated that each employee annually uses approximately 280 hours of combined annual, sick, and administrative leave. We subtracted that

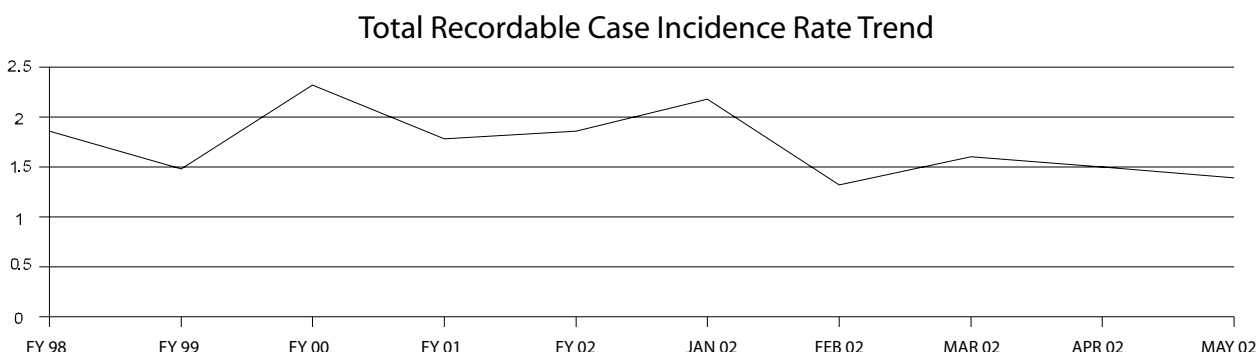
¹An employee with three years of service earns six hours of annual leave per pay period. An employee with 15 years of service earns eight hours per pay period. All full-time employees earn four hours of sick leave per pay period. There are typically 26 pay periods in a leave year.

total from 2087 and rounded down to 1800. Using this formula, we updated injury rates from FY98 to the present and now depict them as total recordable case incidence rates (TRCIR)².

Major findings include:

- **The FY02 TRCIR is comparable to FY01, but down from FY00.** Although the data may not yet be complete, the *annualized* FY02 TRCIR is projected at 1.86 based on data from October 2001 through May 2002. The January 2002 TRCIR was 2.18 while the May figure was 1.39. If these figures do not change, the TRCIR will be higher than FY01 (1.78), but lower than FY00 (2.32), as shown in chart one. There were 41 Workers' Compensation claims submitted for injuries or illnesses in May. However, the Workers' Compensation Office continues to receive claims from previous months, as reflected in the increased annualized FY02 rate.

Chart 1



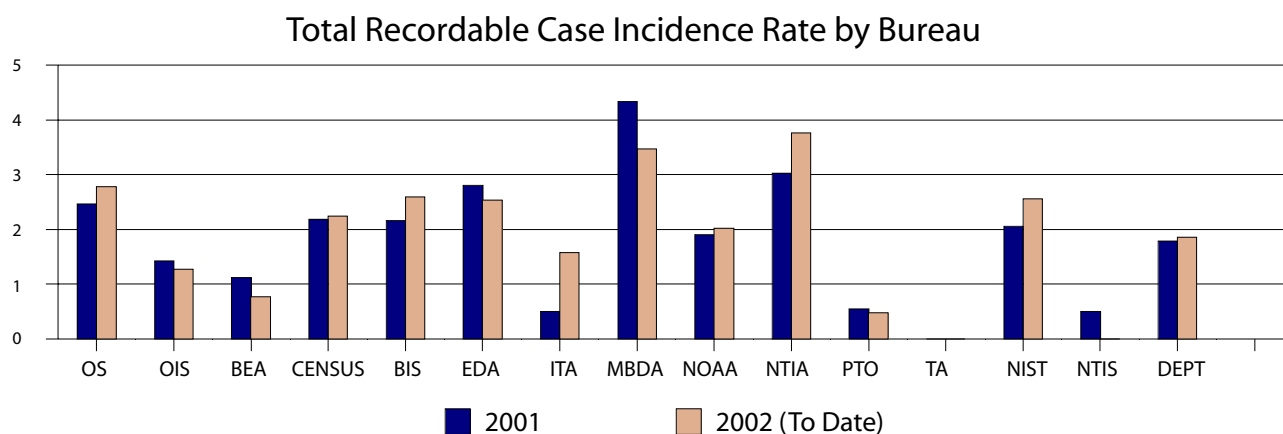
- **Of the larger bureaus, with the exception of the Patent and Trademark Office (PTO), the FY02 TRCIR rates for all bureaus are higher than FY01 (see table 1 and chart 2), with a number of injuries resulting from slips or falls.** The rate for the Department of Commerce as a whole is slightly up from last year. Many of the types of injuries reported can be prevented through improved safety awareness and proper maintenance. A Departmental and bureau focus on eliminating injuries and illnesses is essential. Eliminating injuries and illnesses can be accomplished by evaluating the types of claims submitted and structuring safety awareness training programs to eliminate accidents.
- **Of the smaller bureaus (i.e., bureaus with less than 500 employees), the National**

² **Please note:** The Total Recordable Cases Incidence Rates (TRCIRs) for FY02 presented in this table have been “annualized” based on October 2001 through February 2002 information. To accomplish this “annualization,” we took the injuries for the first seven months of FY02, multiplied these numbers by 1.5, and applied the TRCIR formula. This process enabled us to compute a projected annual TRCIR for each bureau, and for the Department. Our assumption, which may or may not be valid, is that TRCIRs will remain somewhat constant over the course of the year. As we prepare new reports, we will incorporate updated statistical data and modify the projected “annualized” rates accordingly.

Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), and the Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) will have higher annual TRCIR for FY02 than FY01, if injury statistics remain constant. NTIA and BIS each have six reported injuries for FY02. The TRCIR's for the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) and the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) are down from last year. The National Technical Information Service's rate is also down from previous years, with no injuries reported thus far.

Chart 2

Types of Injuries: Information on types of injuries is provided in charts 3 and 4, and tables 2 and 2A. We did not project findings for the remainder of FY02. Key findings are explained below:



- **“Slips/Falls” continue to be the most prevalent type of injury.** “Slips/falls” accounted for 35 percent of all injuries within the Department from FY00 through December 2001. From October 2001 through May 2002, that percentage remained essentially constant at 34 percent of total injuries. Injuries due to “slips/falls” were 39 percent of total injuries for May 2002. More attention should be given to walking surfaces to reduce injuries from slips and falls. Floors that are wet from mopping should have highly visible warning signs, so employees know to avoid those areas. Trips from cords strung across floors continue to cause injuries. Telephone lines, electrical cords, and other cords should be routed away from walking areas.
- **“Exertion” injuries remain second in frequency for FY02.** “Exertion” injuries are 21 and 20 percent of total injuries for FY02 and the month of May, respectively. To prevent back injuries, employees should use a cart to move objects, and avoid hand carrying them. Proper lifting technique includes keeping the back straight and lifting with the legs. For jobs that require repetitive motion, an ergonomics assessment should

be conducted.

- **“Struck and Contact” injuries are also a concern.** These injuries combined for 21 percent of those reported for FY02, and 30 percent for May 2002. The injuries for May resulted from a variety of circumstances, including an assault on an employee and a snowmobile accident. However, a majority of the injuries for FY02 were caused when employees struck open drawers, doors, or low overhead clearances. Those injuries can be avoided by closing drawers that are not being used. Employees should also be aware of their surroundings and use caution. Low overhead clearances should be marked with highly visible paint or tape.
- **“Exposures” are on the decline from early FY02.** A number illnesses from exposure to irradiated mail occurred early in the year. One illness associated with dust and mites on mail was reported for the month of May. Other exposure illnesses reported for May included an adverse reaction to immunization and smoke from a generator fire. The percentage of total injuries for exposure is 6 percent for FY02 and 7 percent for May 2002. Most exposure illnesses can be prevented through proper ventilation and use of personal protective equipment.

Chart 3
Injury Type As Percentage of Total Injuries for
FY02 Through May 2002

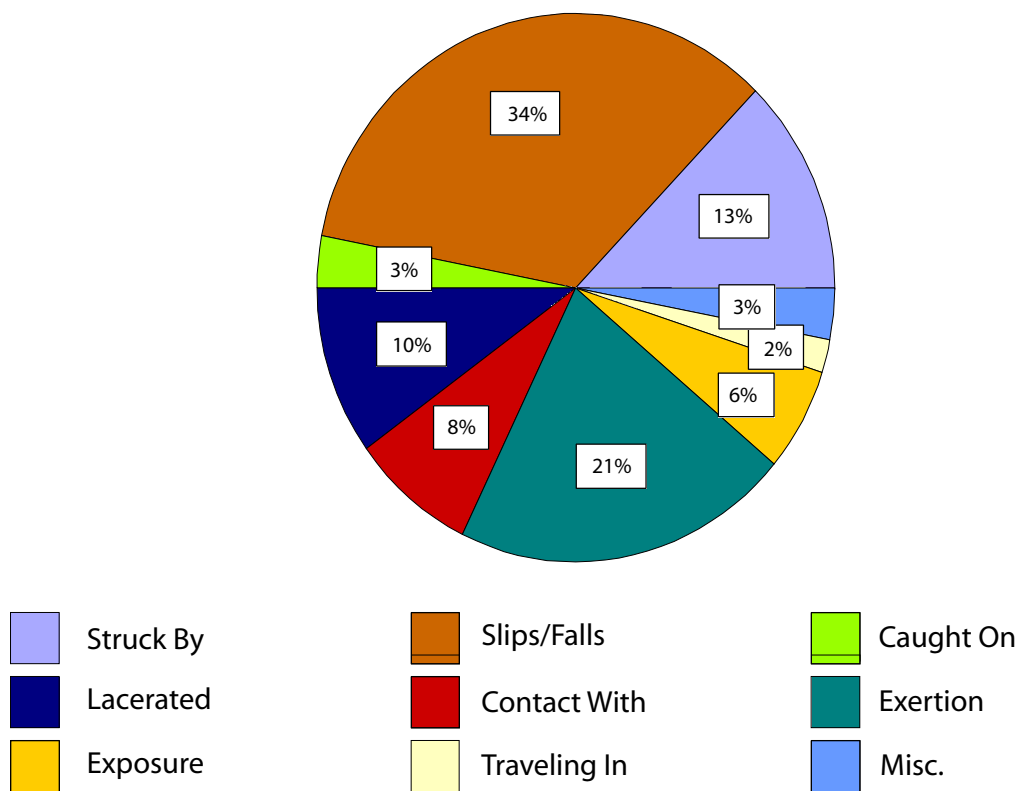
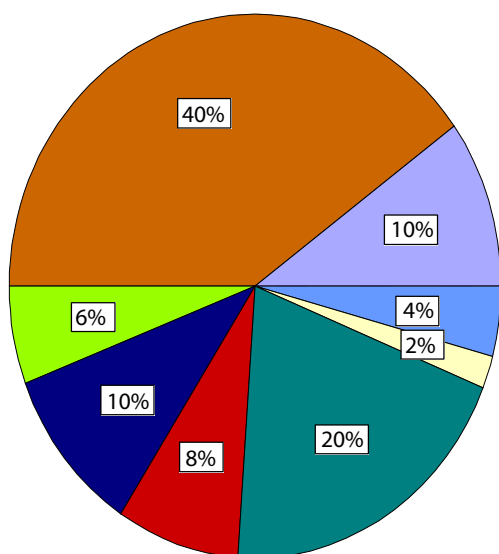


Chart 4

Injury Type As Percentage Of Total Injuries

April 2002



May 2002

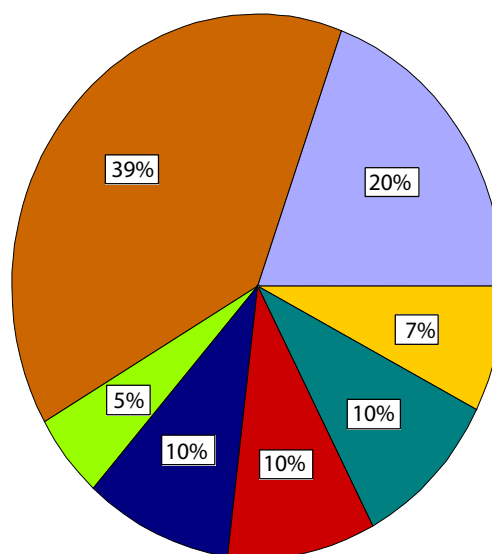


Table 1

TOTAL RECORDABLE CASE INCIDENCE RATE

Bureau	FY1998		FY 1999		FY 2000		FY 2001		March 2002		April 2002		May 2002		FY 2002 (To Date)		
															Actual	Annualized	
	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	No.	Rate
Office of the Secretary	17	2.6	19	2.2*	34	3.82	22	2.46	0	0	1	1.3	0	0	15	23	2.8
Office of Inspector General	2	1.22	2	1.32	5	3.72	2	1.42	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	1.3
Bureau of Economic Analysis	8	1.74	4	0.9	1	0.2	5	1.12	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	0.8
Bureau of the Census	282	1.32	311	1.02	383	2.82	357	2.18	19	1.99	24	2.3	17	1.85	165	248	2.2
Bureau of Industry and Security	10	3.0	11	3.06	15	4.06	8	2.16	1	3.39	0	0	0	0	6	9	2.6
Economic Development Administration	4	1.7	9	3.66	4	1.68	5	2.8	1	5.2	0	0	1	5.09	4	6	2.5
International Trade Administration	26	1.32	18	.9	24	1.22	10	.5	4	3.4	1	0.8	0	0	17	26	1.6
Minority Business Development Agency	1	1.12	1	1.1	3	3.4	4	4.34	0	0	0	0	2	27.78	2	3	3.5
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	280	2.52	317	2.78	306	2.66	216	1.9	17	1.86	15	1.5	15	1.62	149	224	2.0
National Telecommunications & Information Administration	3	1.2	2	0.9	2	0.8	7	3.02	2	10.5	1	4.7	0	0	6	9	3.8
Patent and Trademark Office	38	0.7	27	0.5	29	0.5	31	0.5	2	0.4	3	0.5	1	0.2	19	29	0.5
Technology Administration	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
National Institute of Standards and Technology	105	3.56	84	2.86	80	2.86	60	2.06	1	0.4	5	1.9	5	2.04	40	75	2.6
National Technical Information Service	2	0.6	6	2.6	4	2.14	1	0.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	778	1.86	811	1.48	890	2.32	728	1.78	47	1.60	50	1.50	41	1.39	438	657	1.86
Decennial Census 2000	182	3.42	890	11.32	4798	6.65	32	13.3	N/A	N/A							

Population fluctuations can have a serious positive or negative impact on the Total Recordable Case Incidence Rate.

Table 2

INJURY TYPES BY BUREAU
AGENCIES WITH MORE THAN 500 EMPLOYEES
(Through May 2002)

BUREAU	NOAA			CENSUS			NIST			PTO			ITA			OS			TOTAL
Fiscal Year	00	01	02	00	01	02	00	01	02	00	01	02	00	01	02	00	01	02	
Struck By/Against An Object	42	24	18	54	56	15	17	16	1	4	6	4	1	1	0	0	5	0	264
Falls/Slips	83	72	47	96	153	73	17	19	20	11	13	7	13	5	7	9	10	0	655
Caught On An Object	6	4	3	8	9	7	1	1	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	45
Cuts/Bites	29	20	16	55	36	16	15	12	6	1	2	1	2	1	0	0	0	2	214
Contact With An Object	23	13	10	49	24	11	8	1	4	5	6	4	1	1	2	0	1	0	163
Exertion/ Motion	75	64	39	99	54	28	15	7	9	8	3	1	4	1	2	6	3	1	419
Exposure To Chemicals/ Elements	29	13	8	12	7	3	4	3	2	0	0	1	0	1	6	18	0	11	118
Traveling In Car/Metro/ Taxi	4	4	8	3	10	9	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	43
Miscellaneous*	15	2	0	7	8	2	2	1	5	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	46
TOTAL**	306	216	149	383	357	164	80	60	50	29	31	19	24	10	18	34	22	15	1967

* Miscellaneous includes injuries not covered in the standard OSHA types of injuries. These include twisting/bending injuries, emotional/psychological stress injuries, injuries which exacerbate a preexisting condition resulting in conditions such as heart attack, seizures, and stroke.

** Decennial Census claims were omitted to provide a clearer picture of injury trends

Table 2A

INJURY TYPES BY BUREAU
AGENCIES WITH LESS THAN 500 EMPLOYEES
(Through May 2002)

Bureau	OIG			ESA/BEA			EDA			TA			NTIS			NTIA			MBDA			BIS			TOTAL
Fiscal Year	00	01	02	00	01	02	00	01	02	00	01	02	00	01	02	00	01	02	00	01	02	00	01	02	
Struck By/Against An Object	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	5	0	1	13
Falls/Slips	4	2	0	1	2	1	2	4	4	0	0	0	2	1	0	1	3	3	3	3	2	6	6	0	50
Caught On An Object	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Cuts/Bites	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Contact With An Object	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	3	8
Exertion/ Motion	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	2	1	8
Exposure To Chemicals/ Elements	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Traveling In Car/Metro/ Taxi	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Miscellaneous*	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Total	5	2	1	1	5	2	4	5	4	0	0	0	4	1	0	2	7	6	3	4	2	15	8	6	87

* Miscellaneous includes injuries not covered in the standard OSHA types of injuries. These include twisting/bending injuries, emotional/psychological stress injuries, injuries which exacerbate a preexisting condition resulting in conditions such as heart attack, seizures, and stroke.